



Fact Sheet

South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control • www.scdhec.gov

Pertussis

What is <i>Pertussis</i>?	Pertussis, or whooping cough, is an acute, infectious disease caused by bacteria that is found throughout the world. Pertussis was one of the most common causes of childhood deaths prior to the availability of a vaccine. Since the widespread use of the vaccine began, deaths from the disease have decreased from over 200,000 a year to an average of 4,400 a year. Because the bacteria are so widespread, most communities can expect a few cases of the disease each year. Children under 5 years old are the most susceptible to the disease
What are the symptoms?	Symptoms at the start of the infection period are very similar to those of a cold. The cough gradually becomes more severe 1-2 weeks after the initial symptoms. The cough is often accompanied by a characteristic “whoop” at the end of a coughing attack. This stage could last up to 6 weeks before the symptoms begin to gradually disappear
How is <i>Pertussis</i> treated?	Antibiotics are used both for treatment of the disease and as prevention for close contacts of infected people. Other treatment is largely of a supportive type such as rest and plenty of liquids
How do people catch this disease?	Pertussis is most often spread by contact with respiratory droplets of an infected person. It is a highly communicable disease and can spread to as many as 4 out of 5 close household contacts.
What can be done to stop the spread of this disease?	<p>There is a vaccination available for children 6 years old and under. The vaccination is a requirement for attending school and daycare in South Carolina. It is an effective vaccination provided the child receives the shots on the recommended schedule: 1st shot at 2 months, 2nd shot at 4 months, 3rd shot at 6 months, 4th shot at 15-18 months and the 5th shot when starting elementary school.</p> <p>There is a new booster shot available for people over 10 years of age. The CDC recommendation as to who should receive this shot is expected in late 2005.</p>
How do I know if I should take my child to the doctor?	Anyone with a cough lasting longer than 2 weeks, or a cough that leads to gagging, vomiting or trouble catching breath, should see their doctor.

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL

Region 7

Serving Berkeley, Charleston and Dorchester Counties

Public Health Office • 4050 Bridge View Drive • Suite 600 • N. Charleston, SC 29405 • Phone: (843) 746-3800 • www.scdhec.gov